

Hawks

All the hawks are leaving.
They flash by me
in descending lines
kestrel, coopers, sharp-shinned,
peregrine falcons
dark and intent.

I am dressed in black
seated, hands palm up
on the too green grass
as they land

becoming old friends
I had nearly forgotten, dressed in black
we solemnly shake hands.
They are going on a journey

the bladed wings opening as I
take my hands away, aware of
my meat and heaviness and beyond that
the long thin bone that
runs inside each leg
(their tapered claws
fold together as they rise)

and the precise number
of hawks I brought to earth,
the long slender wings like two slack
parentheses, shaping the breast,
so unlike these
who have looked at me for a moment
and then turned

their faces narrow and feathered
as they leave.

Zoo Tiger

The tiger has hepatitis.
He comes before us
to plead his case. We watch

his breath pale green
in the concrete room.

The great square head
speaks intelligently
point by point
("remember that I do not
even have the memory
of walking in tall grass")

He is old
and very concerned

but a certain flair is lacking
in the monotonous stripes
and the tigerish orange has gone
like old velvet ("please
consider also
I have not complained
unfairly...")

We look ahead
on our mimeo sheets
The Ring-Tailed Cat
has rickets
and looks more spirited.
In an adjacent cage he
nervously rehearses.

The tigers eyes are growing deep.
He coughs into the silence

and stares above our heads.

-- Harley Elliott

Syracuse, New York

On Reading HAWKWEED: Poems By Paul Goodman

I want you, Paul Goodman,
I want you.
Your naive hopes and vivid sadnesses.
I want the way you can feel
all that is immense around you,
and non-man, and then
relate beauty back to men,
confront them
and change them, not alter
nature. I want your securities,
for they are true and precious,
and I want you,
Paul,
because you are so vastly
honest and humane,
and very human.